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How many faculty have been found to have altered student ratings of instruction forms during the past 10 years? How many additional faculty have been investigated because of suspicions that they have altered those forms during that same time period?

Submitted by: Michael Nielsen

11/17/2005

Question:

How many faculty have been found to have altered student ratings of instruction forms during the past 10 years? How many additional faculty have been investigated because of suspicions that they have altered those forms during that same time period?

Rationale:

One of the rationale for considering online evaluations of instructions is that it reduces the likelihood that faculty may tamper with the ratings of their courses. As we explore alternative methods of rating course instruction, we should know how pervasive a problem this is on campus.

Response:

From Linda Bleicken: 1-30-2006:

As noted in the Request for Information, there exists the potential for faculty members (or others) to tamper with the security of student evaluations of instruction as they are

currently administered. However, a concern about tampering was neither the original nor the overriding reason for exploring alternative methods of administering evaluations. Consideration of an online course evaluation process originated when University of System of Georgia institutions were notified of 2004 USG Best Practices winners. In reviewing the Best Practices, the online evaluation process implemented by Bainbridge College interested numerous administrators because it could potentially reduce the resource-intensive effort required each semester to administer and process paper forms.

When an ad hoc faculty committee was assembled to investigate the possibility of piloting an online evaluation system, the group felt it presented several benefits: 1) the reduction of the processing effort, 2) the potential to customize forms for each program, and 3) the possibility of improvement in written comments (this was the experience of one of the faculty members who had already used online evaluations in WebCT). Among the ad hoc faculty committee members, the most significant negative issue raised was that response rates from online course evaluations were consistently low. Discussions with the Student Government Association yielded a proposal that the completion of online course evaluations, if implemented, would be required before a student could view his/her grades in WINGS.

In response to the RFI, I am aware of one faculty member who was investigated during the past academic year for tampering with student evaluations of instruction. I do not know whether there were prior violations of this type. As noted above, the potential for tampering was neither the original nor the overriding impetus for investigating the possibility of online evaluations.

Update: 2/13/2006: Report from Patricia Humphrey (COST), Chair, Senate Executive Committee: Since the last Senate meeting, there was one information request from Michael Nielsen regarding faculty tampering with student evaluations of instruction, and that request was responded